

have no reports at the moment that the status of Gorazde has changed.

Thank you.

Q. Is military action still possible?

The President. It depends on NATO. It depends on what the U.N. commander on the ground, General Rose wants. But their conclusions were twofold. One is that with regard to Gorazde itself, it wouldn't necessarily be possible now for close air support to have the desired military effect. And secondly, that they're trying to get a negotiated agreement here that can serve as the basis not only for relieving Gorazde but for getting these peace talks back on track. So that's what we hope we're doing.

Q. Are you considering actually easing the economic sanctions on the Serbs?

The President. No, not based on anything that's happened so far. We have said to the Russians that if they want to discuss that with

us, that of course we would be willing to discuss it if certain conditions on the ground were met. But continued Serb aggression on the ground, not only in Gorazde but everywhere else, is hardly an encouragement to discuss that. That's not even—we can't even begin discussions in the environment which has existed for the last few days there.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:25 a.m. at the Newport News Williamsburg International Airport. In his remarks, he referred to Yasushi Akashi, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for the Former Yugoslavia; Ambassador Charles E. Redman, U.S. Special Envoy for the Former Yugoslavia; and Vitaly Churkin, Deputy Foreign Minister of Russia. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks and an Exchange With Reporters on Bosnia *April 18, 1994*

The President. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I'd like to say a word or two about the situation in Bosnia. First of all, as all of you know, the situation in and around Gorazde remains grim and uncertain. I think it is important to point out why this happened. It happened because the Serbs violated the understandings of a cease-fire agreement they made with both the United Nations and with the Russians. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first time that the Russians, working through Mr. Churkin's able leadership, have reached an agreement with the Serbs which they have not honored.

The United Nations commander on the ground, General Rose, made the judgment at several points over the last couple of days that NATO close-air support was either not practically feasible or would not be helpful under the circumstances. In Gorazde, we, the United States working through NATO, basically are empowered only to provide close-air support to U.N. troops when they are under siege or under threat of attack on request of the U.N. commander.

I have monitored this situation very closely all weekend; I spent a good deal of time on it on Saturday. I had lots of conversations yesterday about it and have met this morning with Mr. Lake. Our national security principals will be meeting today to consider what else we can and should do in this circumstance.

The main thing I want to point out is that we have to find a way to get the momentum back. The big successes in the last couple of months in Bosnia have been, obviously, preserving Sarajevo and achieving the agreement between the Croats and the Government, the Bosnian Government. They are very important; those things still hold, and I'm convinced we can find a way to build on them and go forward.

But this has not been a great weekend for the peace effort in Bosnia. I do think that the big things are still working in the long-term favor of peace. And we'll just have to see where we are, and we'll be reporting more as the day goes on and through the rest of the week.

Q. Mr. President, you wanted to lift the arms embargo a year ago—

The President. I still do.

Q. —would you still like to do it? Would you lead an effort to do that? It would take American leadership, many in Congress say, to do this.

The President. The Americans tried to lead it before. We will be discussing now what our other options are. As you know, at the time there was a clear specific reason we couldn't succeed in lifting the arms embargo, which was that not just the Russians but the French and British did not want to do it because they had soldiers on the ground. Now their soldiers on the ground are in danger. The real question we would have to work through there is how many countries would go along, and could we get it through the U.N.? But I've always favored doing it.

I just want to say, though—I want to ask you all to think about—those who say, there are many who say, “Well, we can do it unilaterally, and we ought to do it unilaterally.” But remember, if we do that, first of all, there are substantial questions about whether under international law we can do it, but secondly, if you resolved all those, what about the embargo that we have led against Iraq that others would like to back off of but they don't because they gave their agreement that they wouldn't? What if we needed embargoes in the future? What about the trade sanctions on Serbia themselves? What about any possible future economic action in other countries where we have difficulties today that we'd want other countries to honor?

So we have to think long and hard about whether we can do this unilaterally. But certainly, as you know, I have always thought that the arms embargo operated in an entirely one-sided fashion, and it still does. That's the reason we're in this fix today because of the accumulated losses of the Bosnian Government as a direct result of the overwhelming superiority of heavy artillery by the Serbs.

But again, I would say we have been making good progress at the negotiating table. I don't want to have a wider war. I think even if you lifted the arms embargo and you had a lot of other people fighting and killing, in the end there would not be a decisive victory for either side in a war. There's going to have to be a negotiated settlement. And the real problem now is that the Serbs agreed to a cease-fire with both the U.N. and the Russians, and they didn't keep their end of the deal. We're going to have to see where we are today, and we'll have more to say.

Q. Why do you say you're making progress, and couldn't you have moved a little faster? This has been coming on for a couple weeks.

The President. I disagree with that. What do you mean? Keep in mind, the role of the United States and NATO is to respond when the United Nations asks for close-air support when its troops are in danger. This is not Sarajevo; Sarajevo was a special case. And the no-fly zone—if planes violate the no-fly zone they can be shot down. That was done by NATO and the United States. This is a different case. We can only do what we have the authority to do.

And frankly, I think it is a little too easy to Monday-morning-quarterback General Rose who has been very aggressive, very strong, and very much supported in this country and throughout the world for his aggressive actions. It's easy to say now he should have been more aggressive in Gorazde. I think he did the best he could with the resources he had under the facts as they existed. And so I don't know that General Rose had any other options. I just know that we have a disappointing and difficult situation there today, and we'll be working on it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:12 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House, prior to his departure for Milwaukee, WI.

Remarks to Ameritech Employees in Milwaukee, Wisconsin April 18, 1994

The President. Thank you very much. Thank you, Senator Kohl. And thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for that warm welcome. I started to stand on this thing so you would think I

might be the mayor of Milwaukee, but on reflection I decided, like all public officials, I'd rather be closer to the microphone. [Laughter] I want to thank Senator Feingold for his support